





National Dropout Prevention Center
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Engaged Families: An Essential Dropout Prevention Strategy


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Purpose


- Discuss the importance of home school partnerships and identify common characteristics of effective partnerships.
- Provide practical strategies to develop and increase effective home school partnerships.



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Session Focus

- Participants will be introduced to practical and effective strategies to
 - create and maintain successful bonds between parents and educators at the classroom and universal level (building) that will assist in sustaining effective home-school partnerships that promote academic and social success for students with disabilities.



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Parent Involvement According to
the Law

Let' s Review!


Parents = The most influential teachers

IDEA 2004
ESEA
NCLB

All contain
requirements about
parent participation
in their youth' s
education.




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Improving educational results for
children with disabilities is an
essential element of our national
policy of ensuring equality of
opportunity, full participation,
independent living, and economic
self-sufficiency for individuals with
disabilities.”


United States Congress,
Report Language, IDEA 2004
December 3, 2004



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IDEA 2004 also says

“The primary focus of Federal and State monitoring activities shall be on improving education results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities.....”



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What We Need to Know

Most data collection surveys and activities look at


- Schools efforts to partner with parents
- Parents’ perceptions of the quality of special education services
- Parents’ participation in the special education process
- The impact of special education on the services of the child (NCSEAM)

A Combined Effort

A comprehensive dropout prevention program is more than parent involvement.

States now must locate all former students with IEPs. This data can help parents with decisions about secondary placement options – and ultimately impact school completion.






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Family Engagement


From the Beginning...



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Relationships are KEY!


“The ways schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families.” (Epstein, 1995, p. 1).



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Introduction


- Parents are their children’s first teacher!
- As youth begin to navigate and negotiate the world of learning, successful bonds between parents and educators, as well as practitioners are essential during the early years.



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Introduction


- During the elementary years as youth move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”, the partnerships that have formed between parents and teachers remain critical.
- As youth transition to adolescence and beyond, the support gained from effective home-school partnerships are proven to boost students’ academic performance, school attendance, behavior marks, and self-image.



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What Do We Know What Can We Prove...

- Parents are KEY!
- There is power in parent – educator partnerships




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Family Influences are Powerful

(Mapp, 2006)

There is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. The relationship holds across families of all economic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for all students of all ages.



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**Families of all cultural backgrounds, education,
and income levels:**

- Encourage their Children
- Talk to them about the importance of school
- Help them plan for higher education
- Keep them focused on learning
- Help them with their homework

The Importance of Families


Families of youth with disabilities are as involved in school as all parents.

Variations based on disability:

- Speech or orthopedic impairments – most likely to participate in school meetings, events, or to volunteer.
- ED or MR – least likely to participate in above—but most likely to attend parent-teacher conferences.




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Family Influence




- ▶ The most accurate predictor of a student’s school achievement is the extent to which his/her family encourages learning.
- ▶ There is a declining trend in family engagement as students progress in age.




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Family Influence

- Middle school and high school students whose parents remain involved tend to:
 - Have a positive attitude about school
 - Earn higher grades
 - Score higher on standardized tests
 - GRADUATE from high school






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Benefits of Family Engagement Parents

- ▶ Gain confidence in their role, monitor and direct children's educational experiences in the home.
- ▶ Become familiar with child development concepts
- ▶ Increase their communication skills, parenting, organization and time management
- ▶ Become more involved in school and community activities
- ▶ Improve parent-child and family relationships

Source: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory




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Benefits of Family Engagement- Students

When families are engaged in children's learning, students are more likely to:

- Attend school regularly
- Display more positive attitudes about school
- Graduate from high school and enroll in post-secondary programs
- Refrain from destructive activities such as alcohol use and violence




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Activity 1

Group Discussion

Describe home-school partnerships at your school (i.e., good, average, poor, non-existent). Please explain and list present partnerships or parent organizations.



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Creating Partnerships with Parents


- “Despite widespread endorsement of family-school partnerships to support student learning, most educators in the United States have received little or no training in working effectively with families” (International Reading Association, 2002).

What Youth Say....



71% said one of the keys to keeping them in school is better communication between parents and schools and increased parental involvement in their education

Fewer than half said that their school contacted them or their parents when they were absent or dropped out



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ERASE

Parent Dissatisfaction and Disengagement

Explain - What is the problem?

Reason - What is he/she getting out of it or avoiding?

Appropriate - What do you want him/her to do instead?

Support - How can you help this happen more often?


Evaluate - How will you know if it works?



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Steps to Promote Family Engagement


- ✓ Using cultural navigators
- ✓ Educating community organizations
- ✓ Creating focus groups
- ✓ Developing parent mentors
- ✓ Offering multiple ways of participating
- ✓ Identifying and addressing barriers
- ✓ Modeling parent participation at all levels of school leadership



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Strategies to Engage Parents

- ▶ Share your concerns often – as frequently as possible – both the negative and positive -
- ▶ Be certain to share concerns in a positive manner – ensuring that you are assisting in the relationship to improve and strengthen the communication between parents and schools in general
- ▶ Promote communication with your students
 - How does your child describe or interact within the school environment



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Strategies to Engage Families

- ▶ Share the goals you have for your child with administrators, service providers, and teachers
 - Respond to requests from school within a timely manner
 - Seek clarification – WE MUST ASK QUESTIONS!!
- ▶ Ask that they share information with you as well
 - Frequently
 - Personalized
 - Positive and negative
 - Solutions and strategies
 - Commitment to the partnership
- ▶ Home visits
 - Be prepared
 - Ask questions, seek clarification
 - Seek feedback on students’ progress, frequently
 - Establish a line of communication that works best for you and the school representative

Cultivating family involvement



Families say that the current system does not make it easy for them to be effective partners:

- Lack of coordinated, individualized services for students
- Cultural differences may complicate relationship
- Lack of Information

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Cultivating family involvement



Informational needs of parents and students:

- self-advocacy
- balancing educational standards education with functional life skills
- career preparation and employment options
- collaboration across systems

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Cultivating family involvement

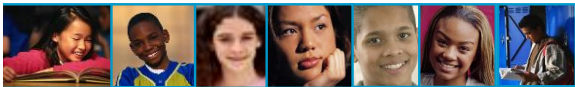


Strategies:

- Offer a wide variety of ways to participate
- Support participation in any school or community opportunity
- Account for cultural and individual differences
- Enable participation regardless of skill level
- Provide support to improve participation skills

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Cultivating family involvement

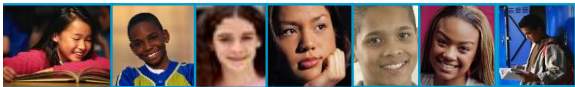


Strategies:

- Meeting schedules that accommodate family needs
- Staff development on welcoming and working collaboratively with families and students
- Supports and materials that reflect diversity
- Regular home and school communication (as an expectation)
- Referrals to community resources

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Cultivating family involvement



Strategies:

- Phone network or chain of volunteer families to call each other
- Short survey to determine events and activities families want
- Invite families to visit, and create a comfortable environment
- Suggestion box for families to communicate anonymously
- Opportunities for youth involvement in all school activities
- Open school gym, pools, classrooms for after-school events

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Cultivating family involvement

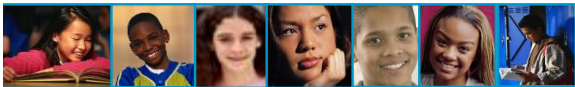


Strategies:

- Written policies that promote family involvement
- Administrative support (funds, space, staff time, etc.)
- Ongoing training for staff and families
- Joint planning, goal setting, policy development, evaluation
- Networking programs to share information and resources
- Evaluation activities at key stages and conclusion of a project

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Cultivating family involvement



Strategies:

- Written policies that overtly respect diversity
- Information for families on policies, goals, reforms
- Training available for families on policy, reform, related issues
- Accessible and understandable decision-making and problem-solving processes
- Students and families on governance and other programs and committees


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High School Students



In the transition years,
parents of children with disabilities
must confront the impact of disability
on their child in the adult world
—as well as new fears for their child’s future.

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Activity 2

Group Discussion

1. Identify and list challenges you school face in developing and/or maintaining a positive home-school partnerships
2. Brainstorm and list strategies to address these challenges.




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Activity 3

Group Discussion


1. List two strategies (e.g., activities, events, meetings, focus groups, media, flyers) that will assist in creating and increasing positive relationships with your child’s school? Consider the following.
 - (1) family awareness,
 - (2) family engagement/involvement, and
 - (3) family support.



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Family Factors that Influence School Dropout

- Poverty
- **Low expectations**
- Abuse
- Mobility of family
- Parent level of education
- Language and literacy levels
- **Level of involvement in student’s education**



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From Research to Practice




Engaging the Whole Family



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Setting Goals


*Developing Relationships as
We Implement Strategies*



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Considerations


- What roles are families comfortable with?
- What information or supports do families need to participate and/or to support students' education
- What's your climate for family involvement?



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Strategies


- Assess your climate-is it family friendly?
- Conduct family needs assessment
- Develop annual family events and build on them
- Send information home frequently



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Strategies


- Help to increase proactive parent involvement
- Improve and strengthen the communication between parents and schools
- Promote communication between students and parents
- Share graduation plans with parents



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Strategies


- Increase communication between home and school (i.e., family outreach)
 - Home visits
 - Inviting parents to be part of school teams and committees
 - Hold parent conferences or support groups
 - Provide feedback to parents on student progress more frequently
 - Report more than just negative behavior



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Strategies


- Tailoring training to the cultural traditions of families improves recruitment and outcome effectiveness
- For example, parents from culturally and racially diverse populations may prefer one-on-one meetings rather than more traditional training formats
- Additional strategies may include family-mentoring programs, needs assessment surveys, and working with culturally specific community organizations that have created relationships of trust




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Strategies

- A variety of communication methods
- Communication based on individual student and family needs and that includes alternate formats and languages as needed
- Reports of positive student behavior and achievement (and
- Improving the literacy skills of English Language Learners



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PBS FAMILIES: Making a "Positive" Connection

Parental input has always been a powerful source of information for educators when it comes to understanding and providing for children's needs. In fact we know children do better in school when parents are actively involved. This year, SWPBS is putting all the pieces together by establishing a "parent connection" that will take PBS Schools to soaring heights!

The SWPBS project in Miami-Dade County Public Schools is utilizing the expertise of four members from local community agencies to inform and involve parents in the PBS mission. On September 11, 2007, Suzy Schumer from PsychSolutions Inc., Monica Rivera from Switchboard of Miami, Janelle Bermudez from FDLRS-5, and Dianne Halfaker from


SEDNET developed the following series of activities that will encourage parent involvement in our PBS Schools:


1. Create an individualized flyer to inform parents about the PBS project.
2. Develop a parent survey that will provide feedback and identify potential PBS parent team members.
3. Plan a PBS Parent night arranged in conjunction with the Parent Academy to generate more parental involvement.

I think you'll agree these ideas are Phenomenal!

If you would like to see more ideas on how to encourage family participation in

your schools, visit the following website:
http://www.iftcmh.org/pbs_families.pdf






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Parent Connection

Maintaining good parent-teacher relationships requires good communication, collaboration, and personal sensitivity. The way school staff interacts with students and their families can make a lasting impression that will impact parental involvement and influence the way students feel about school. Cecilia Nieto, Community Liaison Specialist from FDLRS-South has offered some simple suggestions that will help teachers establish good communication habits and maintain positive connections with parents.

- Make parents feel needed
- Maintain positive communication with parents
- Provide flexible options to meet with parents
- Remember, technology can never replace a friendly smile
- Respect parent's point of view, cultural values and boundaries
- Make kind comments that show you care about their child
- Collaborate with parents on rules, homework, and assignments
- Be prepared to move on, and do not hold grudges
- Be open to changes, don't stick with the "old cheese"
- And always remember to expect the unexpected!!



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"Helping Youth with Disabilities Stay in School and Graduate"
